



Mc Dougall's Good Stories for Children



What Happened to a Little Boy and His Sister Who Did Not Believe in the Fairies and Goblins

"WHEN I was very young," said Paul Kirby, "I used to believe in fairies and witches and all that sort of thing, but now I am wise."

"I don't believe there ever was a Wonderland, and I don't believe Alice ever went there, either," said his sister Pauline, who was two years younger than 10-year-old Paul. "There never was a Jabberwock nor anything like it," she added.

"Nope," said Paul. "All those stories about giants, ogres and goblins are for mere children; not for us who are educated. When I was little and when you were too small to understand, our nurse used to recite a charm that she said would protect anybody from elves and fairies. I remember it very well indeed. It went like this:

"Winky, wacky, feathers and fur,
Hanky, panky, briars and burr;
Sticks and stones and bones and hair,
Goblins, demons, elves, beware!"

"How silly!" said Pauline. "I remember she used to read to us about Tom Thumb, Aladdin and the Lamp, Cinderella and the Snow Queen." "Yes," added her brother, "and about Little Red Ridinghood, Fuss-in-the-Boots and Jack the Giant Killer, also. I've long got past believing in Princes changed into frogs, deer and seven ravens, and yet, I suppose, there are lots of children no older than us who still think all these tales are quite true."

"I suppose so," replied Pauline. "As for me, elves and genii, talking birds and seven-leaved boots are merely so many fables that have come down to us from ancient times, when people were too ignorant to know the true from the false."

"That's it!" said her brother. "Giants and elves both are traditions of a remote past when little was known about the world, and people imagined all sorts of wonders to exist in strange lands and awful monsters to abide in the sea. People believed then in charms, talismans and spells; sorcerers, wizards and witches were everywhere and goblins haunted every forest."

"I am glad we are so learned," said Pauline. "I don't think I'd like to really believe in wishing caps and invisible coats and forests of gold and silver."

"Nor I either," said Paul. "Think of really giving credence to a story about ants that talk and fishes that come to help the Prince! What folly! Or imagining that a tale of a flying-mat that would carry you anywhere you pleased could be true, as some children do!"

"Still, I suppose there was something that gave rise to all these stories," said Pauline.

ALL DUE TO IGNORANCE

"All nonsense!" declared her brother with emphasis. "They came to us from our ignorant and deluded ancestors, and I have read how they were told thousands of years ago around the firesides, just as they are now. Only then the grown-up people believed them, but now they are for kids, I mean children. I have read that the tales about animals that talk come down from the days when men were named after animals, just as our Indians are now, so that when you hear about the rabbit doing or saying anything it means that once a man called the Rabbit did so and so. See?"

"Some stories I like to think about," said Pauline. "Such as the Babes in the Woods and the Little Mermaid, don't you?"

"Nope. I think all such tales are foolish. They breathe in the young a wild and unnatural thirst for the wonderful and impossible, and also enlarge the imagination. I think a child with an enlarged imagination a sad object."

Paul, although but 10 years old, was, as you may have guessed, a very remarkable boy. He had studied since he had reached the age of 8 a vast number of learned authors who wrote about such subjects as ancient myths and fables, as well as geology, natural history, astronomy, osteology, corchology, numismatics, histology, paleontology, algebra, tort, psychology and hundreds of otherologies too numerous to mention and too confusing to remember for more than a minute. Pauline had read Huber on "Ants," Spencer on "Pig Pong" as a Survival of Prehistoric Sport, Darwin's "Study of a Chinch-Bug" and Kropotkin's "Animals Out Visiting," as well as a number of other learned works on similar subjects, and so she was almost as wise as Paul, although she was not quite so firmly convinced of the foolishness of all these stories as he was. They both spent all the time not devoted to study to such games as golf, chess and "authors," for neither of them had any desire to play the rude, common games with which other children amused themselves. Paul could see no fun in base-ball or shinny, and as for hop-scotch or marbles, he considered them far beneath a lad of his age and attainments. In fact, no game that was not extremely sedate and entirely dignified was played by either of these children, for they were always dressed in the extreme of style, and were very



HE SAW THAT THEY WERE SURROUNDED BY THE FAIRY-TALE FOLK

careful of their clothes. When Paul was not wearing his golf suit he was dressed in black velvet, with a lace collar, his hair was always brushed and his shoes polished like a mirror. Pauline, being a girl, was of course always very prim and correct, but I suspect she would have been less so had she not been always with her very sedate brother. When she sometimes expressed a desire to ride in a merry-go-round he put on a severe look and asked her if she was an infant and offered to get a baby carriage for her. He had long since laughed her out of the habit of playing with dolls or jumping the rope, and she was rapidly becoming as serious as Paul. She knew as much as he did, too, about the various myths; could explain what a jack-o'-lantern or will-o'-the-wisp is in very precise terms, and yet, down in her heart, she sometimes was sorry that she would not allow her to believe that fairy tales were at least partly true.

You see she was very young, and therefore it was not to be expected that she should be as firm and steady as her 10-year-old brother in her unbelief.

When Paul caught her sorting over her discarded dolls in secret, he lectured her severely, and made her read Darwin as a punishment, while he stood by and smoked a cigarette. Paul often declared he was sorry that there were no giants, ogres or dragons, for he felt that these things would be worth the attention of a boy who despised ordinary play and childish pastimes, and he was resolved that when he grew up he would be a lion, tiger or elephant hunter in the jungles.

The two often rambled in the woods for the purpose of studying botany and geology, and when they held the conversation I have just quoted they were in a glen deep in the forest, where the sunlight checked the mossy earth with tiny golden patches, and where the ferns grew waist high. The trees were all huge and gnarled, with great mossy bolls, and in places the pine needles carpeted the ground so thickly that they went along as noiselessly as mice.

Suddenly they came to an opening where the tall grass came to their shoulders, and as they pushed their way through Pauline exclaimed:

"Look! there's a fairy ring!" "Oh fudge!" cried Paul. "You know that is merely a superstition! Those so-called fairy rings in the grass are formed by a species of fungus called the Koodleus Circuformis, a sort of minute toad-stool which destroys the grass in a circle. I wish you'd get over calling things by wrong names!"

They both looked carefully at the fairy ring for a moment, then Pauline remarked:

"Sarah Smythe says that her mother told her that if you stood inside of a fairy ring and made a wish it would come true."

Paul was very angry at his sister for repeating such a foolish statement. He took her by the hand, and with some slight objection on her part he led her into the ring of dead grass. Standing in the circle he said: "Now make a wish, you silly goose, and see what will happen!"

Pauline, much confused, put her thumb in her mouth, and said:

"I-I guess I don't want to make a wish. It looks very silly, but somehow I am afraid."

"Pooh! What is there to be afraid of? I'll make a wish," cried Paul. "I hereby wish all demons, fairies, goblins and other fairy-tale folks and

things to assemble here at once before me and demonstrate their power. Come one, come all, giants, elves, genii and trolls, every being both great and small, that ever dwelt in the pages of books or in folk-lore, I summon you here!"

This sounded so much like an old-time conjuror calling up familiar spirits that Pauline trembled and even her brother felt a sort of thrill pass through him as his high-sounding words echoed through the gray woodland aisles. They both looked around rather apprehensively as he ceased speaking, and then they started as seven coal-black birds fluttered noiselessly down to the ground beside them. They saw instantly that they were ravens and the seven princes who were changed into ravens flashed into both minds at once. Paul looked at his sister with a peculiar expression and she turned pale, but in another moment he took out a cigarette and lighted it to show how brave he could be, although he was rather more alarmed than he would have admitted. Pauline opened her book on folk-lore and pretended to read, while the ravens croaked ominously and then flew to a low-hanging branch above the children's heads.

"Don't you think we'd better be leaving?" whispered the girl.

"No, sir! I want to show you how foolish it all is," replied Paul, puffing away vigorously. Pauline seized his hand, for now she saw something that was hidden from him on account of the smoke about him. Just outside the fairy ring stood a tiny boy as high as her ankle, who was staring up at her with an expression of defiance and sorrow mingled. Beyond him was a figure which she recognized instantly, for it was a girl in a red hood, who stood beside a great gray wolf. The wolf's eyes were like fire, and from his hungry mouth dripped froth, but the girl in the red hood was holding him back.

ALL THE FAIRY FOLK THERE

"It's Little Red Ridinghood!" cried Pauline, and at the sound of her voice Paul peered through the thick cloud of smoke and started as he saw that the fairy ring was surrounded by a circle of strange forms. Directly before him stood a group of elves no taller than his knees, and it was very plain that they were all very angry, for they glared at him sullenly. He turned away from them trembling and saw a tiny, slender figure with a bright star at her forehead, gazing reproachfully at him. Again he shifted his glance and his eyes fell upon a gigantic frog clad in an ermine vestment and with a golden crown on his head, who blinked up at them sadly. The ravens croaked loudly in the tree above. The children saw Cinderella kneeling there, and beside her the prince and princess, both of whom were seemingly disheartened and sorrowful. Behind them stood the old King, frowning and deaf, wondering what was happening, and even Prass-in-Boots and the deer that was a prince were there. Paul was quite ready to run now, but, strange to say, when he tried to lead Pauline away his legs refused to move. He seemed to be rooted to the ground within the fairy ring. Then he saw the old-witch coming up, preceded by a black cat, whose eyes flashed fire at him, while a bear growled in the bushes near by.

He saw that they were surrounded by the fairy-tale folk and that it was impossible to escape. It came into his mind that there were others also, and

some very dangerous creatures, too, which might be expected to arrive at any moment and he began to feel a great fear. Then he glanced up and, to his great alarm, saw leaning upon the very branch upon which the seven ravens had settled a great and awful man, whom he instantly knew was an ogre. This man had a horrible knife in his hand and was glaring down at them with a look that was appalling indeed, for he seemed just about ready to attack them in the true ogreish manner and eat them at once. Even as he trembled Paul saw more and more of the fairy people arrive. There were Little Klaus and Big Klaus, the Snow Queen looking like an icicle in silk and satin, the Ugly Duckling quacking dismally, the Steadfast Tin Soldier, Aladdin with his Lamp, Sinbad the Sailor, the Three Dogs with eyes like saucers, Rumpelstichkin the Tailor, the Chess Queens, the Walrus and the Carpenter and the Little Mermaid, while far off in the gloom he could dimly descry King Arthur and his knights. But even while he was busy recognizing everyone there was a movement in the crowd, and all gave way for a dreadful giant, led by a small boy, whom he at once saw was Jack the Giant Killer.

"Where is he?" cried Jack, as he stopped and looked around.

"You show him to us!" roared the giant, whose head was far up among the tree tops. "I'll eat him at once!"

"I got here first!" shouted the ogre. "I have first claim!"

"We have no time to squabble over it," cried Jack, "for the Black Genie is almost here, and I saw the roc coming also, and when they get here there'll be no question as to who'll get them!"

"Genie or no genie, he's mine," growled the ogre, "and I'll eat him. As for the roc, I'll have him well picked and broiled for breakfast if he comes near me."

The giant reached down among the branches and seized the ogre.

"I've been looking for you a long time," said he, "and now I've got you. We will settle this matter at once."

Then began a terrific combat. The trees were uprooted and their limbs torn off, while the air was so filled with leaves and dust that it was impossible to see ten feet. All the fairy folk scattered in confusion and fled to safer regions, and Paul, seeing that the spot was a very dangerous one, seized Pauline's hand and darted into the shrubbery in a hurry, but fast as was his flight he could not outrun the bear, who had hidden in the same bushes and who followed close at his heels. To escape from an ogre or a giant only to be devoured by a bear seemed to be the fate of the children, for to their terrified eyes the animal seemed very ferocious. Finally, utterly exhausted, they fell on the ground unable to take another step.

The bear seemed quite as tired when he flopped down beside them and panted:

"You needn't run away from me, for I am not really a bear at all. I am Prince Cardaman, who was turned into this shape by a wizard. If you keep on going in this direction it will be the worse for you."

"Why?" asked Paul.

"Because," replied the bear, "the fire-breathing dragon with iron scales who devours young maidens is coming this way and will surely get you."

Summoned Them to a Fairy Ring and Nearly Lost Their Lives in Trying to Escape the Monsters

"But," exclaimed Pauline, "if we go back either the giant or the ogre will get us, without speaking of the wolf and the other horrid things."

"Is there no hiding place?" inquired Paul, trembling as he looked around.

"I might take you to my den," said the bear,

"but it is some distance away and the dragon is likely to appear at any moment. If we hurry, however, we might make it."

"Let us go at once," cried Paul, taking his sister by the hand, and they all hurried away. Through tall grass and thorny blackberry bushes they rushed and in a short time they reached the bear's den, a hole in the side of a hill, and into its gloomy depths they plunged. Here they drew breath and were thankful for their escape, but scarcely had they recovered from their fright than they heard an awful wheezing and puffing, besides smelling a sulphurous, smoky odor which increased every moment.

"It's the dragon and he's seeking us; probably tracking our footsteps," said the bear.

"Can he get in here?" asked Pauline.

"I think not," replied the amiable animal. "He might put his head in, but his body is too big and we are very far back in the rocks, you see, so I think we are safe."

Just then a great uproar arose outside and the bear, after peeping out, said:

"It's worse than I thought. There's a genie fighting with the dragon. Each of them claim you as their prey."

Paul trembled and his sister began to weep. The terrific noise and even the dust and sulphurous smoke from the dragon's nostrils penetrated into the depth of the cavern, almost suffocating them, but the combat did not last long. Soon silence fell and the bear went to the opening. He came running back and whispered:

"The genie is hurt a little, but he's looking for us."

Soon a great, hairy hand stole into the cave and felt about its sides, groping around into all the crannies, but by the exercise of great agility they managed to evade the twisting fingers. The hand probed every hole and corner, and more than once Pauline narrowly escaped capture, for it was nearly as big as the cave itself, and there was little room for them to move around its hairy, spidery fingers. The genie was growling and muttering in a voice like thunder, and was evidently greatly disappointed at not finding them. Finally he withdrew his hand, and the bear, after he had gained his breath, for he was very fat, stole out once more. When he returned he said that the genie and the giant, as well as the ogre, were all sitting outside discussing whether it was worth while to remove all the rocks from the hill-side.

OLD NURSERY SPELL WORKED

Paul was now greatly alarmed at his sister's condition, for she was so exhausted that she could scarcely stand, and he said:

"I think it would be best for me to run out and try to lead them off in pursuit of me. Then you can escape with Pauline."

"They would surely get you," said the bear. "Oh, I wish one of you knew a magic spell. That's the only thing that could save us."

"Why, you know a nice spell!" cried Pauline, sitting up suddenly. "Don't you remember the one our nurse used to tell you? She said it would protect one from things that were after you."

"I'll try it," said Paul, "although I am afraid it will be of little use! Here goes:

"Winky wacky, feathers and fur,
Hanky panky, briars and burr,
Sticks and stones and bones and hair,
Goblins, demons, elves, beware!"

"It don't say anything about genie or ogres or giants," he added, dubiously. "But maybe it means them."

"It sounds like a good one!" said the bear, thoughtfully. Then he suddenly began to jump up and down in great excitement.

"It's working! It's changing me!" he cried.

"See! I'm turning into a man again!"

Sure enough, he was, and in two minutes there stood a handsome young prince before them. Paul could scarcely believe his own eyes. The prince then ran out, and when he returned he announced that the enemy had vanished and the coast was clear. The giant, ogre and genie had been "dispelled." They went home without seeing anything of the fairy folk. Not long after that the prince returned to his own land, but I am told that he's coming back next year to marry Pauline, for as this happened some time in the past she is now old enough to marry.

Now Paul believes in fairies and such things, and no wonder. Yet, unless such an adventure happened to me personally, I would still have some little doubt as to their existence. I would like any boy or girl who has really seen a fairy to write me all about the experience. WALT MCDUGALL.

Easy Edgar, to the Rescue of Helpless Woman, Gets Into Trouble

